1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

a scene from their own past they describe it minutely and statically, as though they were looking at a picture. They frequently like to make their descriptions clearer by employing twigs or pebbles to represent the people and things described.

It is probable that the value which is placed on story-telling has greatly influenced the Lepcha tendency to monologue, to talk as it were in paragraphs, to which I have already referred; this tendency is noticeable even in the speeches put into the mouths of the characters of their stories. Stichomythia is only applied to jokes.

V

Besides being the greatest social diversion, speech is also the greatest social sanction. For through speech is produced the strongest unpleasant psychological sensation that the Lepchas recognise—shame; and shame is on occasion so unbearable that it leads to suicide.

The training and education of Lepchas from their earliest childhood stresses social approval and disapproval as the motive for adopting or abstaining from certain types of behaviour. A child is told that if he does certain acts—takes other people's property for example, or refuses to work—other people won't like him and won't help him. The emphasis is always on the disapproval of the community in general and not, as with us, on the losing the love of the parents, or the gods, or on the punishment by people in authority. It would seem (though without further evidence this is only a speculation) that this emphasis on anonymous social approval together with the fact that the extended family is a psychologically operative group, and that positive training takes place relatively late in the life of the child, has the result of producing a much weaker internalised control (or super-ego) than is the case when the approving and punishing mechanism is introjected in the image of the parents and parent-surrogates. It is also noteworthy that the Lepcha social organisation only renders possible identification with the community as a whole, and, though to a lesser extent, with the extended family; the Lepchas have not, as most European children and adults have, smaller groups in the community with whom they can identify, and whose approval will support them against the condemnation of another part of the community.

If this is an accurate representation of the case it would follow

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

626 that the ego, though normally less disturbed, is also more vulnerable to attacks from without. The mechanisms of self-justification and ●154 self-criticism have been brought into play much less. When feelings of guilt are continuously evoked the ego acquires a capacity to deal with them more or less satisfactorily, and is able to balance the support of friendly objects against the actual or believed punishing tendencies of the hostile objects; but when the evocation of guilt feelings depends on exteriorised social disapproval, and when the community which expresses this disapproval is relatively tolerant without over-exacting standards, the occasions when the individual has to deal with such situations are very rare—indeed may never arise after childhood. Consequently the strength of [762] the negative feelings is enhanced by the fact that they are more or less novel; and if the extended family join the community in exteriorising their disapproval the shamed person has no moral support left; in psychoanalytical terminology the whole of the super-ego has turned against the ego and this will produce suicide.

152 The Lepchas describe shame as producing a very unpleasant physical sensation, chiefly located in the belly. When I was trying [673] to discover the Lepcha attitude to sin in the lamaist sense of the word, several people told me that the difference between sin and shame was that, although sin may possibly have some effect on your body or on your after-life, it does not affect you mentally nor do you feel anything in your belly when you commit a sin comparable to that which you would feel if you were reproached for doing your work badly. At one of the big monastery feasts a man from a neighbouring village informed me that turning one of the big prayer-wheels would remove a thousand sins. 'What are sins?' I asked him. 'Killing animals, thinking evil thoughts, doing evil deeds.' 'Do you mind killing animals?' 'No.' I then turned to the people standing around and asked them what sins were? The Mandal, speaking for the community said 'You had better ask a lama; we laymen don't know.' The majority agreed to this; but twelve-year-old Ribu standing by said that sin was killing animals; but it was no sin if the animals were, had been, or might have been eating your crops.

It is extremely easy to shame a person. For example one morning fourteen-year-old Chimpet arrived with an extremely dirty face, after I had made him a present of a cake of soap. I made fun of him in front of his father who joined in; whereupon he turned down his mouth, refused to speak and went and fidgeted with the monastery

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

boy and girl concerned. The children are, however, consulted and are never forced to marry against their will; but at this age they do not seem to have any very strong likes or dislikes, and seem usually willing to marry anyone whom their parents suggest. I do not think the question of love ever arises, and am personally doubtful whether such a state of mind is known to the Lepcha; but the reasons for this will be more fully discussed in the following chapter. There is a tendency, however, for boys who go away from home to work to insist on choosing their own partners, and to delay their marriage until a somewhat later age than the normal. There are, of course, not many such; but under the feudal system prevailing each village has, according to the size of its population, to provide a boy or two either for service in the Palace at Gangtok or for training in the State Carpentry School. These boys are usually away from home between, roughly, the ages of twelve and twenty, but some prefer to stay on. They seem to find it a little difficult to fit into the scheme of village life when they first return, but in Lingtem there was no apparent case of a boy being permanently maladjusted on this account. They settle down quite comfortably after the first few months and are probably better, in the long run, for the additional experience. Most of them learn to speak Nepali, and one or two can read and write a little. The system has much to commend it, and enables the Maharaja to keep in personal touch with his tenants. This would otherwise be impossible, since a personal visit to Jongu, Lepcha hospitality being what it is, would be too much of a drain on the district's resources. This His Highness fully realises, and wisely keeps away.

[p. 222 is blank]